

SOLUTIONS

Eat these foods before Colour Run 2016 for peak performance

Fill up on the right nutrition to boost your energy levels during your run.

5 August 2016 by Davelle Lee



PHOTOGRAPH: Dean Drobot, 123rf.com

Running has taken Singapore by storm, with more and more people have been jumping on the bandwagon. If you are late to the party and are new to the running scene, here are some tips on how to design the right diet to prepare your body for a race.

Jaclyn Reutens, a sports dietitian and founder of Aptima Nutrition & Sports Consultants, tells us what changes runners need to make to their diets in the weeks leading up to a race.

Leading up to the race

Be mindful about excessive fat and added sugar intake. Trim off any excess weight, if possible. A mere 2kg weight-loss can improve their energy levels and increase stamina, since this cuts the load that your legs must carry while you run.

Even if you are not trying to lose weight, avoid rich, fatty and deep-fried foods from your diet. Too much fat makes you sluggish and you should be optimising your training sessions as much as possible.

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Stay away from fast food, sugary snacks like doughnuts and unhealthy local dishes, especially those that contain coconut milk such as curries and laksa. Get rid of oily snacks like dough fritters and curry puffs too. Reduce the use of mayonnaise and creamy sauces and salad dressings. Less or no cream is best.

Have regular meals- three proper meals every day with one snack in between, if necessary. This will help your body use energy efficiently.

Keep alcohol intake to a minimum in the weeks leading up or avoid it if you can. Alcohol impedes liver glycogen storage and it dehydrates you, so you definitely should steer clear of it the night before the race.

Avoid trying new foods or drinks in the few days leading up to the race, as this might cause gastrointestinal upset or diarrhoea.

Right before the big day

When you run, you are relying on carbohydrates as your body's main energy source. This means that you need to eat foods that maximise glycogen stores in the muscles and liver the day before the race. Load up on a larger portion of carbohydrate-rich if you are running distances of 10km and above.

Eat a simple and easy-to-digest meal with smaller amounts of protein and fats, such as be pasta dishes like spaghetti bolognese, pasta primavera, plain rice with steamed

side dishes, noodles in soup or a baked potato with grilled fish.

Leave out foods that can create gas, such as broccoli, cabbage, beans, capsicum, lettuce, raw vegetables and onions. The last thing you want is to feel bloated when you wake up in the morning.

Ensure that you go to bed well hydrated, at least 2 litres for the day before the race. Drink water throughout the day, it does not have to be excessive. You can also drink fluids in the form of juices, soup and milk. If your run is likely to stretch over 60 minutes, down a sports drink the night before, and bring one along for the race.

[The morning of the race](#)

In an ideal situation, you should eat a proper main meal two to four hours before the race. For events that start in the early hours of the morning, you can eat a heavier dinner the night before and have a pre-race snack about an hour before.

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Fill up on carbs to top up your blood glucose and glycogen levels that would have been depleted in your sleep. Drink lots of fluids to keep yourself well hydrated which will prevent muscle cramps.

Test out your pre-race meal of choice to ensure that your stomach can handle it while running. You want to avoid nasty surprises on race day. A good combination would be any of the following:

- 1) A banana and water or a sports drink
- 2) Small bowl of low fibre cereal with milk, and water or a sports drink
- 3) A slice of white bread with thick spread of jam or honey and water or a sports drink
- 4) A smoothie consisting of milk, banana and yoghurt- good for those who cannot eat solid foods before running

If your distance category is 15km or longer, pack some good snacks or drinks for the road. Bring along a banana, plain low fibre crackers, a sports gel or sports bar and small bottles of your preferred sports drink. Make sure you have practised with your snacks during your training sessions.